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Minutes

Foster Carers Advisory Committee

26 June 2025 | 10.30am – 12.30pm

Chairs: Cara Jones and Steven O'Reilly

Present

Jenny Alexander-Brown	Nottingham	JAB
Dawn Elliot	Leeds	DE
Cara Jones	Chrysalis Consortium	CJ
Steven O'Reilly	TACT	SOR
Melanie Stubbs	Shropshire	MS
Fiona Trewartha	East Riding, Yorkshire	FT
Shada Panjabi	Waltham Forest	SP
Alastair Scott-McKinley	West Region, Northern Ireland	ASM

In attendance

Georgina Coope	CoramBAAF	GC
Emma Fincham	CoramBAAF	EF

Apologies

Hanan Al-Najjar	Waltham Forest	HAN
Adam Dalal	Blackburn with Darwen BC	AD
Nazeema Gill	Homefinding Fostering Agency	NG
Lisa Little	Hull	LL
Nicky Lockett	West Midlands	NL
Rebecca Pacy	Time Out, Sussex	RP
Darryl Pottinger	Greenwich	DP
Jennifer Roy	Haringey	JR

1. Welcome, minutes from the last meeting and matters arising

1.1 CJ welcomed members to the meeting. Minutes from the last meeting were accepted as an accurate record of discussion. There were no matters arising.

2. Updates, challenges and celebrations

2.1 Members took turns to share their recent challenges and celebrations.

2.2 One challenge to return to could be communication with social work teams via email/phone and the difficulties that arise from limited communication channels. Specifically, supervising social

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workers advising foster carers they will only communicate via either email or WhatsApp/text message.

3. Engaging the Fostering Policy Team with FCAC feedback

3.1 During the last CoramBAAF Foster Carers Advisory Committee **(29/01/25)** a discussion was had around 1) foster carer wellbeing in relation to being part of the team around a child, 2) the impact of child-to-carer violence and 3) the lack of transparency of information sharing regarding children's previous placements.

3.2 Following his attendance at this meeting, Chris Senior (DfE) asked the group to consider these themes and provide responses to the following questions:

- Where are the gaps in existing regulations and guidance and what specifically needs to be added/ amended to address these gaps?
- Where regulations and guidance are available, can you identify why these are not translating to best practice within your local services?
- Do your fostering services have written policies/guidance that address foster carer wellbeing, child-to-carer violence and/or child placement history? If so, is this guidance adhered to in your experience?

3.3 Member responses were grouped into four key themes:

- Foster family support
- Child support
- Being part of a team around a child
- Fostering processes

3.4 Members looked at their collated responses and discussed how best to present these to DfE.

Action: GC to make suggested amendments to the document.

Action: EF to ask Advice Line for guidance on retracting resignations following distressing incidents.

4. Equality, diversity and inclusion

4.1 *Pride Month* – CJ expressed disappointment that their fostering agency did not get involved in Pride celebrations, feeling that this should be embedded in the culture of fostering without foster carers having to put in extra work. As an across country service, SOR shared how TACT are longstanding participants in various Pride events.

4.2 ASM suggested a need for routine equality screenings of new policies, which agencies have a legal duty to perform but don't always. ASM emphasised the importance of screening based on the foster carer population, as well as the child population.

5. Transferring foster carers

5.1 The Fostering Network have a policy on transferring foster carers, but the process remains challenging for both foster carers and practitioners. EF is looking for a couple of foster carers to join a working group, looking at what is/is not currently working and how this could be improved.

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The end result will be something akin to a practice note or other tool/guidance document. Several local authority and IFA reps have already volunteered to take part.

5.2 The complexity of transfers for all involved – including children – was recognised. EF to discuss transfers further with Chris Senior (DfE) next week.

Action: Members to contact EF and GC if interested in joining the working group. Members can also email with thoughts on the transfer process if don't want to attend meetings. Examples of positive experiences, as well as challenges, are welcome.

5.3 Concern was expressed around social workers asking children's opinions on transfers, including the threat of children being removed. It was felt that, in some instances, children are 'weaponised' against foster carers as a means of retaining them. Members also expressed frustration at foster carers needing to 'prove' why they need to leave an agency, which would not be necessary for any other job.

5.4 It was felt that fostering should be treated like any other qualification, meaning approved carers should be able to move agencies without starting assessments from scratch. This would save money and time and improve retention.

6. Feedback from Panel Conference

6.1 EF reflected on CoramBAAF's first panel conference, where feedback from this committee was used to facilitate a workshop. Panel members in attendance were shocked at some of the experiences presented to them, but praised the learning opportunity and expressed interest in future events.

7. Any other business

7.1 Following an internal discussion, CoramBAAF staff will be removing themselves from the advisory committee WhatsApp group. Members are welcome to continue with this chat under their own administration.

Action: EF and GC to remove themselves from WhatsApp group by the end of summer.

7.2 Sam Penny has stepped down from this committee. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for all of her contributions.

Date of next meeting: 22 October 2025

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